



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INFLUENZA CASES CONFIRMED IN WISCONSIN RESIDENTS

(MADISON, Nov. 10, 2003) – State public health officials today announced Wisconsin has identified its first cases of influenza for this season. The two cases, confirmed by the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene to be influenza type A (H3N2), involve a 20-month old male and a 23-year old female, both from southern Wisconsin. The male patient had no history of travel outside of the state during the week prior to illness, while the female patient had a history of travel to Illinois where she worked.

"These culture-confirmed cases of influenza mark the start the 2003-2004 Wisconsin influenza season," said Mark Wegner, MD, with the Wisconsin Division of Public Health. "We recommend that people at high risk of influenza complications be vaccinated as soon as possible," he added. It takes two to three weeks after vaccination for a person to develop sufficient antibodies to provide effective protection from influenza.

"The identification of influenza in Wisconsin serves as a great reminder that people should get their influenza vaccination," Dr. Wegner said. "Influenza immunization is safe, effective, and just makes sound medical sense."

Yearly vaccination is recommended for the following groups of people who are at increased risk for serious complications from influenza:

- persons aged 50 years and older;
- residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities;
- adults and children 6 months of age and older who have chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma;
- adults and children 6 months of age and older who need regular medical care or have been hospitalized because of diseases like diabetes, chronic kidney disease, or weakened immune system;
- children and teenagers (ages 6 months to 18 years) who are on long-term aspirin therapy and therefore could develop Reye Syndrome following influenza infection; and,
- women who will be more than 3 months pregnant during the influenza season.

The Division of Public Health recommends that health-care workers including physicians, nurses, other hospital and outpatient-care setting personnel, and first response workers get the influenza vaccination. Employees of nursing homes, chronic-care and assisted

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living facilities who have contact with patients or residents, and those who provide home care to persons in high-risk groups are also encouraged to be vaccinated. Household members--including children--of people in high-risk groups should be vaccinated as well.

Typically, influenza is first identified in Wisconsin between early November and late December. It is impossible to predict the length or severity of the influenza season, or when influenza activity will be at its highest. Historically, peak activity in Wisconsin occurs in late January or early February. Influenza viruses can change each year and therefore influenza vaccines must be developed for each season, and annual influenza vaccination is needed for protection.

For more information, visit:

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Public Health Immunization Program: <http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/immunization>

Influenza Fact Sheet: <http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/healthtips/BCD/Influenza.htm>

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site on Influenza:
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluinfo.htm>

Local Public Health Department Listing: http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/DPH_Ops/LHDL.HTM